

LEDGER OF LIES



A Book Written By
PRASOON JADON

Title: LEDGER OF LIES
Author: Prasoon Jadon

Dedication

To my family and all dreamers who dare to bend reality.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who inspired this story—my teachers, friends, and mentors who encouraged my creativity. Special thanks to my readers on Wattpad for their support and feedback that made this journey possible.

Table of Contents

Prologue	1
Chapter 1 — The God of Education	5
Chapter 2 — The Dream Job	15
Chapter 3 — The First Ledger	25
Chapter 4 — The First Meeting	35
Chapter 5 — The First Lie	45
Chapter 6 — The Revenge	55
Chapter 7 — The Luxury	65
Chapter 8 — The Big Scam	75
Chapter 9 — The Paper Leak	85

Chapter 10 – The Journalist	95
Chapter 11 – The Confession	105
Chapter 12 – The Man in America	115

Prologue - "The First Entry"

The numbers looked perfect.

Debits matched credits. Assets balanced liabilities. And not a single line in the thousand-page report raised an eyebrow.

But the truth was buried—not between the lines, but beneath them.

In the heart of Kota, the city that builds IIT dreams and breaks countless others, a man in a crisp white shirt adjusted his tie, stared at the glowing screen, and hit "Save". That one click sealed a lie worth one thousand crores.

His name? Prashant Rathore—Chartered Accountant. A man trained to uphold the law of numbers, now its greatest defier.

He didn't come to steal.

He came to serve.

But when he walked into the empire built on student success stories, he saw what others didn't—ghost admissions, fabricated rankers, and accounts cleaner than truth itself. They weren't just hiding the fraud. They were thriving on it.

And so, he made a decision.

If they could write lies on paper and call it success, he would write a masterpiece of deceit and call it destiny.

This isn't just a story of fraud.

It's a story of ambition, greed, brilliance, and betrayal.

And it all started with one entry in a ledger—the first lie

Chapter 1: The God of Education

"Yahan ek hi bhagwan hai...

Jo education industry ka baap hai — Prashant Rathore."

— Chaiwala near Jawahar Nagar Circle, Kota

1 April 1999, Kota

It was just another day in Kota, Rajasthan — the city of

toppers.

Where dreams come in school uniforms, and coaching is religion.

The morning sun fell over narrow streets, where rivers of students flowed toward their coaching centers — heads down, books in hand, eyes full of pressure.

Their backpacks were heavier than their bodies. Their dreams — even heavier.

The main roads were choked with autorickshaws honking, parents praying, and hoardings screaming:

“AIR-1 from Acharya Institute!”

“100% Selection in IIT-JEE!”

“Join the Godmakers of Kota!”

Giant cutouts of top rankers with garlands, trophies, and smiling teachers loomed over buildings — worshipped like local deities.

And then — it happened.

At 9:06 AM, a convoy of black CBI vans rolled into the city like a declaration of war.

In front of Acharya Institute, the most powerful name in

India's private education industry, the vans screeched to a halt.

Within minutes, over 100 CBI officers surrounded the campus.

- Gates sealed.
- Offices locked.
- Computers confiscated.
- Accounts room barricaded.
- Mobile phones snatched.

Inside the mansion, in the VIP zone of Civil Lines, half the CBI force gathered at the grand villa of a man who wasn't just the richest man in Kota — he was its architect.

He built rankings from scratch, molded toppers like statues, and sold dreams in installments.

His name was whispered like a myth in student hostels.

Prashant Rathore.

Founder and CEO of Acharya Institute.

CA by degree.

Tycoon by design.

Feared by rivals.

Worshipped by students.

And on that morning, he sat calmly at his ten-seater teakwood dining table, in a white kurta-pajama, sipping chai from a bone-china cup.

His Rolex glinted under the chandelier.

His silence was louder than the chaos unfolding outside.

CBI BURSTS IN

Without knocking, CBI Inspector Devika Sharma stepped in.

Sharp. Focused. Furious.

Her boots echoed on marble as she looked him in the eye.

She barked, "We have enough evidence to arrest you. We know everything."

Prashant took one more slow sip.

"Did you find anything?"

he asked, with a cold smile that had made hundreds of people nervous for years.

Devika didn't reply.

She grabbed his arm and ordered, "Take him."

"Warrant?"

Prashant raised his eyebrow.

She didn't care.

He didn't resist.

The God of Education was put into the CBI van in full public view.

THE CITY FREEZES

News spread faster than the desert wind.

Within an hour:



Newspapers rolled out in bold:

"₹1000 Crore Scam: Prashant Rathore Arrested"

"CBI cracks down on India's largest coaching empire"

"God of Education, or God of Scam?"



News channels cut their regular shows.

 Journalists surrounded the Acharya gates, shouting into mics.

 Students whispered, unsure whether to open their books or cry.

“Kya sir jail jaayenge?”

a boy asked his teacher, still holding his Physics notes.

The teachers looked at each other silently, masks of pride cracking into panic.

In a dark, locked storeroom at the back of the accounts wing, a layer of dust floated gently in the air.

On a wooden desk lay a faded red register, bound in cloth, untouched for years.

On its cover, in smudged black ink, was written:

Ledger of Lies

(1995 - 1997)

“Yeh kahani un sachchaiyon ki hai... jo kabhi file mein nahi likhi gayi.”

 The God Falls

The man who had once declared,

“I don’t make teachers or students. I make gods of them.”

...was now seated in a steel-floored van, hands behind his back, sirens wailing toward Delhi.

Behind him, his empire stood still.

Whiteboard markers had stopped writing.

Answer keys had stopped printing.

Toppers had no classes that day.

And in a world obsessed with marks, a bigger number had emerged — ₹1,000 crore.

But money wasn’t the real crime.

The real crime was buried in the lies he turned into ledgers.

Next Chapter: The Beginning — 1990, when a young CA walked into a crumbling office in Kota with nothing but a calculator, ambition, and a secret plan...

Chapter 2: The Dream Job

You must be wondering — why did the CBI arrest me?

Who am I?

What is this ₹1000 crore scam?

Phuuu...

Let me tell you.

Before I was the God of Education,

I was just a man... running barefoot in the streets of Bundi — chased by a man who wanted ₹1000 back.

Flashback: 1 January 1990 – Bundi, Rajasthan

The winter sun peeked through the cracked windows of our two-room rented house, warming the thin bedsheet I was wrapped in.

"Utho, subah ho gayi."

My wife's voice was soft, but it had authority.

Poorva — my wife.

My arranged marriage.

My unexpected blessing.

She was standing at the corner of our kitchen, wearing a faded blue saree, flipping parathas on a rusted tawa.

The kitchen had no door. Our walls had no paint.
But her presence filled the house with a strange kind of peace.

I yawned, stretched, and walked toward the bathroom.
My 5-year-old daughter, Kritika, was still sleeping, her arms around an empty tiffin box — her most precious toy.

I was a CA — Chartered Accountant.
Degree in hand. Knowledge in heart.
Money? Dreams? Those were still borrowed.

Just as I came out with a gamchha over my shoulder,
there was a knock on the door.
A hard, urgent knock.

“Bhai! Bhai!!”
It was Ranveer — my childhood friend, my brother without blood.

I opened the door. His face was pale.

“Bhai... wo aa gaya hai. Apna udhaar chukane. Suraj...
woh tumhe dhoond raha hai.”

Suraj — the man from whom I had taken ₹1000 six

months ago.

To buy books. To buy ration. To keep Kritika in school.
He wanted his money back.

And I... had none.

My chest tightened. I looked back.

“Poorva! Gate band kar lena! Koi aaye toh kholna mat!”

“Par aap kahan ja rahe hain?”

“Bas... thodi der ke liye...”

I ran.

Down the stairs. Onto the street.

Jumped over a bicycle. Dodged a vegetable cart.

The entire gali watched as I ran like a thief — no, like a man escaping shame.

Suraj shouted from behind, “Prashant! Ruk jaa!”

But I was faster. Desperation is a better fuel than anger.

I vanished into the alleyways.

Ten minutes later, I walked home — breathless, sweating, embarrassed.

Old uncles looked at me.

A shopkeeper shook his head.

Kids whispered, “Prashant uncle bhaag gaye the...”

I knocked at the door.

Poorva opened it slowly. Her eyes were scared but calm.

“Ab kya hoga...?” she whispered.

I collapsed onto the charpai and muttered, “Main kuch sochta hoon.”

She sat beside me. Held my hand.

“Hum dono sochenge.”

That was Poorva.

She never asked for gold, holidays, or sarees.

She only asked for one thing — hope.

A Knock That Changed Everything

An hour passed.

We were still sitting in silence when — again — a knock.

My heart froze.

Poorva looked at me. I looked at her.

“Woh Suraj ho sakta hai...”

I signaled her not to open.

She slowly walked toward the door.

And then a voice said —

“Dakhiya hoon, postman. Prashant ji ke liye patr hai.”

Poorva opened the door, slightly confused. The postman handed her a white envelope.

She opened it and began reading aloud.

“Aapki naukri Acharya Institute, Kota mein lag gayi hai...
CA Position... ₹20,000 mahina...”

She paused.

Looked at me.

I blinked.

“Mujhe vishwas nahi ho raha...!” she whispered, tears filling her eyes.

I snatched the letter. Read it again.

I wasn't dreaming.

It was real.

The biggest coaching institute in India had hired me.
20,000 rupees per month.

My dream job.

My ticket out of humiliation.

The House Turned Into Diwali

I stood up — shouted like a child.

“Poorvaaaaa! Job lag gayi! JOB LAG GAYI!”

“Kritikaaaaa! Papa ki job lag gayi!”

We danced in the small room.

I held her by the waist, spun her in circles. She laughed like we were in a movie.

Kritika woke up and clapped.

I ran into the street, shouting:

“Mujhe job mil gayi! Acharya Institute mein! Kota jaa

raha hoon!”

“Bhaiiiii! Job mil gayi!” I hugged Ranveer tightly.

“Main ab sab kuch theek kar dunga.” I told everyone.

Even the shopkeeper who laughed at me earlier smiled back.

At the Railway Station — That Night

It was dark when we reached Bundi Railway Station.

Poorva had packed my clothes in a tattered brown suitcase.

She tied two rotis in cloth and folded my undershirts neatly.

Kritika was holding a small handmade card:

“All the best Papa. Bring chocolates.”

We stood in silence as the train to Kota rolled in. Steam hissed. Platform lights flickered.

I turned to Poorva.

She didn’t cry.

She placed her hand on my chest and said:

“Jaaiye Prashant ji. Par kabhi galti mat kijiye.”

I smiled.

I wanted to say yes.

But somewhere in my heart, a strange fear lingered.

As I climbed into the train, I looked back one last time.

My daughter waved.

My wife pressed her palm in blessing.

And I stepped into a world I had only imagined before.

Kota — the land of toppers.

The factory of futures.

The place where I would become... something more than a man.

But I didn't know then... that this city would make me a king — and then tear off my crown.

That I would build an empire... by burying the truth.

That the same platform where I waved goodbye... would someday carry the headlines of my arrest.

Next Chapter: Kota – The First Day

How Prashant meets the founders of Acharya Institute, the start of something legendary... and how the first small lie enters his ledger.

Chapter 3 - The First Ledger

The train slowed with a long, tired screech, and the station nameboard slid into view — Kota Junction. I gripped the handle of my worn leather bag and stepped down onto the platform.

Instantly, the air changed. It was thick with the smell of chai, fried pakoras, and engine smoke. A flood of voices surrounded me — hawkers shouting their wares, coolies calling out for customers, mothers yelling after children darting between legs. This was my first time in Kota, and my first time seeing such a crowd in one place. It felt like the whole of Rajasthan had gathered here.

I pushed through, asking strangers for the way out. A paan-stained man pointed left, a schoolboy pointed right. Eventually, I found myself in front of a long row of rickshaws.

“Talmandi jana hai,” I told one puller, his face lined like

the dry soil of Bundi in summer.

“Pachaas rupaye lagenge,” he said, as if announcing the weather.

“Pachaas? Zyada hai,” I protested.

He looked at me, gauging the stubbornness in my eyes, and sighed. “Chalo, bees rupaye de dena.”

I smiled — a small victory on my first day in the city. I climbed into the rattling seat, and he began to pedal.

The road stretched ahead like a moving postcard — narrow lanes opening into busy chowks, women bargaining over vegetables, students clutching thick books to their chest as if life itself depended on them. Kota felt alive.

After fifteen minutes, the rickshaw turned into a broader road, and I saw it.

A tall cream-colored building stood behind an iron gate, its walls plastered with huge posters of smiling toppers. In bold red letters, the board read:

Acharya Institute

My chest tightened. This was it — the place that had offered me my dream job, twenty thousand rupees a month, more than I had ever imagined earning.

I paid the rickshaw puller and walked through the gate. The reception was busy — teachers hurrying with answer sheets, peons carrying steel kettles of chai, the faint smell of chalk in the air. I asked a clerk for the Accounts Department, and he directed me up a flight of stairs.

I knocked on a wooden door.

“Sir, may I come in?”

“Yes,” came the voice from inside — deep, clipped, and to the point.

I stepped in. Behind a desk sat a man in his late forties, thin-framed glasses perched on his nose, surrounded by towers of files.

“Sir, I’m Prashant Rathore... the new accountant.”

“Yes, I know,” he replied with the faintest nod. He pressed the small brass bell on his desk.

“Ramu!”

A young office boy appeared almost instantly.

“Ramu, inhe inke office mein le jao. Aur hamari journal, ledger, trial balance, aur purane saal ki balance sheet dikha do... taaki yeh apna kaam shuru kar saken.”

Ramu nodded, gesturing for me to follow.

We walked down a corridor lined with metal cabinets, the smell of paper growing stronger with each step. My new office was a small room with a desk, an old ceiling fan creaking above, and a dusty shelf filled with bound registers tied in cloth ribbons.

“This is your office, sir,” Ramu said. “Sab files yahan hain.” He pointed to the shelf and left.

I sat down, feeling the chair’s wooden edge dig into my back. I opened the Journal first — tidy entries, clean handwriting, everything looking perfect. Too perfect.

Then I opened the Ledger.

My eyes narrowed. The numbers danced strangely — amounts rounded off too neatly, expenses that repeated like clockwork every month but in suspiciously similar

figures. Dates shuffled like a deck of cards, receipts that didn't quite match the payments.

And then, the biggest tell — a student scholarship expense recorded in the ledger... but I knew enough to spot that the same student had already been billed for “full tuition” in the journal.

I leaned back, a slow smile curling at my lips.
Window dressing.

This wasn't just accounting. This was art — the kind of creative accounting that could only be pulled off if everyone in the chain played along.

I let out a quiet laugh, not out of joy, but the thrill of knowing something others didn't. Somewhere in this building, behind the smiling posters and glowing promises, money was flowing in rivers — and not all of it was clean.

I closed the ledger gently, almost with respect.

This, I knew, was only the first of many such books. And somewhere... there would be one ledger that didn't lie — a ledger that told the truth about Acharya Institute.

The first ledger.

Chapter 4 - The First Meeting

The next morning, I reached the office before the peons, before the chai had started boiling in the steel kettles, before even the sweepers had finished their work.

I wasn't there for work.

I was there for the truth.

The previous evening, I couldn't shake the thought of what I had seen. In the journal, several transactions had no ledger folios. Suspicious, I had cross-checked in the ledgers — and to my surprise, every folio was neatly filled. Too neat.

But the problem was not what was written. It was what was missing.

Certain students existed in the journal but vanished in the ledger. And some students existed in the ledger, but in ways that didn't make sense — fees paid when admissions didn't match, dates shuffled like a street magician's trick.

False admissions.

The word kept hammering in my mind all night. If true, it meant the empire of Acharya Institute wasn't built on toppers and teachers alone — it was built on ghosts, students who never existed but whose fees filled someone's pocket.

So here I was, before sunrise, searching for proof.

I slipped into the record room — a musty smell of ink and old registers filled my nose. Rows of fat, dust-covered admission registers lined the shelves. I pulled one out — the handwriting slanted, neat columns of names, fathers' names, hometowns, fee receipts stapled to pages.

And then, suddenly, my eyes froze.

One student's name appeared twice — once in 8th batch, once in 12th. Same father's name. Same photograph pasted, but different roll numbers.

Another student: roll number allotted, but no address, no guardian's name.

Another: name scribbled in, but receipt number missing.

My throat went dry.

This was it. This was the ledger of lies.

And then — a hand landed on my back.

I jolted, my heartbeat jumping into my ears.

Turning around, I saw him — the manager. A thin man in a grey safari suit, hair oiled and combed flat, with a smile that was polite but eyes that said: I know what you're doing.

"You see everything," he said calmly.

"Now... talk to Acharya Sir."

I froze. For a moment, I considered denying it. But then, I closed the register, put it gently back on the table, and nodded.

"Yes."

Outside, a black Ambassador car stood waiting. Its chrome shone like polished silver in the early morning sun. I had never sat in such a car before. When the manager gestured for me to enter, I hesitated — but then I lowered myself into the back seat.

The moment I sank into the cushions, I felt like I had stepped into another world. The seats were softer than my bed at home. The air smelled faintly of perfume

instead of dust. As the driver pressed the pedal and the car glided smoothly onto the road, I thought of Poorva and Kritika back in Bundi.

I was in heaven. But heaven always came at a price.

The drive took us from Talwandi's narrow student hostels to the wide, tree-lined roads of Vigyan Nagar. Slowly, the buildings grew taller, richer. And then I saw it.

The Acharya Mansion.

A palace masquerading as a home. High compound walls topped with iron spikes, guards with rifles at the gate, cameras swiveling like watchful eyes. Inside, fountains danced in the courtyard, and imported cars stood parked in neat rows.

The manager spoke to a guard. "Inhe Sir ke paas le jao."

My legs felt stiff as I followed the guard inside. The marble floor gleamed so brightly that I could see my reflection in it. My palms were damp with sweat.

And then, in the middle of a grand hall filled with plush sofas and golden drapes, I saw him.

Acharya.

The man whose name was enough to make teachers bow, whose posters hung across the city, whose smile beamed down from billboards larger than life.

In reality, he was older than I expected. Fat, with a belly that strained against his silk kurta. His face was round, but his eyes... sharp, calculating, as if they could measure the weight of your soul in rupees. And his smile — a smile that could disarm you, kill you, or own you, all without lifting a finger.

“Come, sit,” he said, his voice smooth as ghee.

I sat across from him, trying to steady my breath.

He leaned forward slightly, resting his elbow on the armrest. “So... what do you want? To forget all these things you’ve seen?”

He clapped his hands. A servant appeared instantly with a chequebook on a silver tray.

The pen was uncapped, ready.

I stared at it. For a moment, my mind did maths. How

much could I ask for? Ten thousand? Fifty thousand? A lakh? Enough to pay off Suraj's debt, secure Kritika's future, give Poorva a better life?

But something inside me changed in that moment. I wasn't just an accountant anymore. I had seen the rot in the foundation of Acharya's empire — and I realised, if I played it right, I could become more than just a silent witness.

I leaned back, forcing a calmness into my voice that I didn't feel.

"Not money."

Acharya raised an eyebrow.

"I want fifty percent share... of Acharya Institute."

Silence. Even the air seemed to stop moving. The servant froze mid-step.

And then, slowly, Acharya began to laugh. A deep, rolling laugh that shook his belly. I felt my lips curve too. In that moment, the hall echoed with our laughter — the laughter of two men who had just agreed to rewrite the rules of the game.

We shook hands.

That day, Prashant Rathore — the small-town CA from Bundi — was reborn.

Not as an employee.

Not as a victim.

But as a partner in the game.

And in Kota, the game was always about one thing:

"Paisa aur khel mein hisaab ghano pakko hai."

.

Chapter 5 – The First Lie

"Fifty percent... hahaha," I whispered to myself as I shook Acharya's hand. The sound of our laughter still echoed faintly in the grand hall.

Acharya clapped once, and a servant appeared immediately. "Kuch kachodi aur chai lao," he ordered.

I sank into the sofa, letting the weight of the morning settle. The grandeur around me — marble floors, silk drapes, crystal chandeliers — felt unreal. Yet, in that unreal comfort, my mind raced.

“I think the old accountant wasn’t good at window dressing,” I said casually, testing the waters.

Acharya’s eyes twinkled behind the sharp smile. “Yes,” he replied, almost amused.

“I... I want to do that accountant work myself,” I added, carefully measuring each word.

He raised an eyebrow. “Really?”

I leaned back, letting my voice remain calm. “Not as an employee, Sir. If we appoint someone else, our secrets may get exposed.”

His smile widened. “You are right.”

The servant returned with chai in small clay cups and golden-brown kachodis on a silver plate. We ate slowly, the warmth of the tea mixing with the buzz of adrenaline in my veins. Each bite, each sip, felt like a ritual — a first step into a world I had only glimpsed from the outside.

I stood, preparing to leave. “I should go now...”

Acharya waved me back. “Wait.”

From behind him, a driver emerged with a black Ambassador — the same car that had driven me from Talmandi. My jaw dropped. The leather seats gleamed, soft and inviting. The polished wood reflected the sunlight, and the air smelled faintly of sandalwood and cologne.

“This... this is for me?” I stammered.

“Yes. Consider it yours. Seat yourself, sir,” the driver said politely.

I sank into the cushions. Heaven. Pure heaven. And yet, unlike before, this time I didn’t feel small. The car doors closed behind me, and the driver glided smoothly toward the office. The city looked different from this seat — like a kingdom I now belonged to.

When I reached the office, I realized everyone already knew. Whispers followed me down the corridor.

“Sir!”

“Congratulations, sir!”

“Wow, fifty percent partner... unbelievable!”

I felt a strange pride, tinged with fear. This was my first step into a world of power, secrets, and lies.

I called Ramu and instructed him: “Put every book inside my new office. Ledger, journal, trial balance, subsidiary books — everything.”

My new office was more than a room — it was a throne. Luxurious chairs, polished wooden tables, walls lined with shelves, each filled with registers and files, and a soft carpet underfoot that muted every step. I sank into the chair, letting my mind absorb the possibilities.

Soon, Ramu appeared at the gate. “Sir, may I come in?”

“Yes,” I said, my voice firm.

He entered, placing each register and sheet neatly on my table. My eyes scanned them, taking in the familiar handwriting of months past. The numbers, the dates, the receipts... and then, my eyes stopped at a few entries.

Fake students.

In the journal, a student's name appeared with full payment details. In the ledger, the same name appeared again, same amount, same receipt. Subsidiary books matched perfectly. Everything aligned — perfectly false.

A thrill ran through me. This was it. My first lie. My first real manipulation of numbers. A lie that no one could detect, a lie that could fill pockets, secure empires, and protect secrets.

And in that moment, I realized: this was the game.

In Kota, the city of dreams and toppers, I wasn't just a player anymore. I was learning the rules — and I was ready to bend them.

The ledger of lies had begun.

Chapter 6 – The Revenge

After sealing my fifty percent partnership in Acharya Institute, after my first successful “lie” in the ledgers, I felt untouchable. The ink on my first forged entries had barely dried, and already my blood was rushing with a

strange new power.

I wasn't the same Prashant Rathore from Bundi anymore.

I was someone else.

That evening, I left my glass-walled office and stepped into the waiting Ambassador car, its cream leather seats swallowing me in comfort. My driver, a silent man in uniform, bowed slightly and opened the door. The world outside — students rushing with books, teachers running to classes — looked ordinary. But my life was no longer ordinary.

“Sir, where to?” the driver asked.

“To a bungalow near Vigyan Nagar,” I said, with a confidence I had never tasted before.

The car glided past billboards of toppers' faces, past lines of hostels, into a quieter, richer lane where the houses looked more like palaces than homes. Then I saw it — the bungalow. Huge gates of iron, polished marble stairs, lawns like those in movies. I stood frozen for a moment, staring at what I could never have imagined just weeks ago.

As I stepped inside, chandeliers sparkled above me. Imported tiles shone like water under the light. For a second, I thought — am I in heaven?

I didn't bargain, I didn't calculate. For the first time in my life, I didn't care about numbers. I signed, paid, and bought it. Just like that.

"Sir, where next?" the driver asked.

"Bundi," I said. My voice was calm, but inside me was a storm — not of fear, but of revenge.

The journey felt different this time. Not like a man running away from creditors, but like a conqueror returning to his kingdom. The car rolled into Bundi by late evening. The streets I had once walked barefoot now echoed with the sound of my luxury tyres.

Neighbors gathered as soon as they saw the Ambassador stop outside my old rented house. Faces pressed against half-broken windows, whispers in the air — "Kaun aaya?"

Then I stepped out. In my tailored suit, polished shoes, and a smile sharper than any sword. Silence fell. The same people who once pitied me, who mocked me for

borrowing 1000 rupees... now stared like I was a king.

“Driver,” I said, “the bag.”

He pulled it out from the car’s dicky and placed it on the ground. I unzipped it slowly, deliberately. Wads of cash gleamed inside. Notes, fresh and thick, stacked higher than any of them had ever seen.

“Khūb kamāyo hai maine,” I said, my voice steady but cold.

“Sab apne paise le lo... sūd ke sāth.”

One by one, creditors stepped forward. Suraj, Ranveer, and the rest. Their hands shook as they took the money. Some looked guilty, others looked ashamed. I didn’t care. I wasn’t paying debts anymore. I was buying respect. Buying silence. Buying fear.

When the last note was gone, I turned toward the house. “Poorva!” I called.

The door opened. My wife stepped out, her dupatta loosely draped, our little Kritika clutching her hand. She looked at the car, at the cash bag, at the neighbors. Her eyes widened.

“Yeh kya hai?” she whispered.

I smiled. “Main ab sirf ek accountant nahi hoon. Main 50 percent partner hoon — Acharya Institute ka. Yeh car, yeh paisa... sab hamara hai. Chalo, car mein baitho. Ab ham Bundi mein nahi, Kota ke bungalow mein rahenge.”

Poorva’s lips trembled. For a moment, she smiled with me, eyes glowing with dreams she never dared to dream. But then, a shadow passed over her face. She looked at me long, as if she could see the lies behind my confidence.

She knew. She knew I had started something dangerous. But she stayed silent.

I held her hand, guided her into the car. Neighbors still watched, whispering. But I didn’t look back. The Ambassador roared to life, carrying us toward Kota, toward luxury, toward power — and toward the lies that would one day bury me.

Chapter 7 – The Luxury

The car glided smoothly through the highway lights.

Poorva sat silently beside me, her eyes scanning every detail of the leather seats, the polished wood, the shining chrome handles. A faint smile danced on her lips.

Kirtika, sitting at the back, leaned forward, eyes wide in wonder.

“Papa, wow... yeh car? Kya yeh hamari hai?”

I glanced at her in the rearview mirror and smiled.

“Haan, beta. Ab yeh sab hamara hai.”

Her face lit up, but before she could ask more questions, she yawned, curled into the seat, and soon drifted into sleep.

I turned towards Poorva. She was watching the night sky through the tinted glass. Her soft smile made my heartbeat quicken. Uff... ek baar phir mera dil... she doesn't even know what she does to me.

The car finally slowed down, pulling up to the gates of the bungalow near Acharya Institute. Tall iron gates opened, revealing the mansion inside—its sprawling garden, marble steps, and chandelier lights glowing through wide glass windows.

Poorva's hand gripped her saree tightly. Her eyes widened.

"Yeh... yeh kya hai?"

I stepped out, straightened my coat, and opened her door. Extending my hand, I said with a calm smile—
"Yeh sab maine kamaya hai... sirf tumhare liye."

She didn't speak, just stared at the house in disbelief. Together we walked up the grand steps. The marble floor reflected the chandelier lights like a mirror. For a moment, it felt like we had stepped into heaven.

I gently lifted Kirtika into my arms, carried her upstairs, and laid her on the soft new bed in her room.

"Kal subah surprise denge," I whispered to Poorva. She just smiled, holding the doorframe, eyes still lost in shock.

Later, inside our bedroom, I took out a folded piece of paper from my coat pocket.

"Tumhare liye kuch likha hai," I said, my voice low.

She raised an eyebrow and laughed.

"Aap account ke ilawa bhi likhne lage?"

I cleared my throat, pretending to be serious.

“Arz kiya hai...

Itne khubsurat mat ho, itne khubsurat mat ho... nazar lag jaayegi.

Ishq kiya hai, mazaak nahi... ek baar try karke toh dekho.”

Poorva clapped lightly and laughed.

“Wah, shayar babu! Aap toh surprise pe surprise dete ho.”

Her laughter melted into silence. That night was filled with whispered words, quiet laughter, and the warmth of a new beginning.

The next morning, sunlight streamed into the room. Poorva and Kirtika were still asleep. I buttoned my shirt, straightened my tie, and quietly picked up my keys.

I paused at the door, looking back once.
Poorva sleeping peacefully... Kirtika curled like an angel...
For a moment, I wanted to stay.

But no. Today was important.
Today was the meeting with Acharya.

As the car engine roared to life, one thought echoed in my mind—

Luxury comes with a price. And I was ready to pay it.

Chapter 8 – The Big Scam

The car moved like a shadow through the silent streets of Kota. Neon lights flickered on shuttered shops, rickshaws stood abandoned at the corners, and yet my mind was louder than the entire city.

I leaned back, fingers tapping the leather seat. Why does Acharya want to meet me today?
Is our scam doing well? Or... is this something bigger?

A strange laugh escaped my lips, soft at first.

“Sir?” my driver glanced at me in the mirror.

I shook my head.

“Kuch nahi...” I muttered, but inside, the laugh grew. The streets were silent, but my head was filled with a storm of questions.

Because months had passed. Months of lies. Months of ledger tricks. Months of multiplying fake students and ghost accounts. Every balance sheet, every journal entry — a well-written drama. And now, the money was

flowing like a river.

But I knew it. It was time for something bigger.

The car slowed. The headlights reflected off the glass façade of Acharya Institute. My driver stopped, stepped out, and respectfully opened my door.

For a moment, I didn't move. I stood there, staring at the building. A few months ago, I was just a small-town accountant from Bundi, running away from creditors. Today? I was a partner in the biggest coaching empire of Kota. A man neighbors once mocked now threw bundles of cash back at them. Life, indeed, was a cruel comedian.

I smiled at the thought, then walked towards the transparent glass doors. My heartbeat was quick. Was it guilt? Fear? Or simply the thrill of the game?

Through the doors, I saw him. Acharya. Sitting with the calmness of a king who owned half the city. I entered, and the air itself felt heavier.

"Baithiye, Prashant ji," he gestured. I sank into the sofa, leather creaking under my weight.

Acharya clapped his hands once — “Ship!” — and a man rushed in, holding a crystal glass of water.

“Drink, Prashant,” Acharya said, his tone commanding yet warm.

I held the glass. The cold water steadied my nerves, but only for a second.

And then came the question.

A question so heavy it made the walls echo inside my head.

“Prashant ji... aapke paas koi plan hai? Kaise hum apne business ko aur badaa sakte hain?”

For a moment, silence. The ticking of the wall clock grew louder.

Then, slowly, my lips curled into a smile. My eyes betrayed the excitement I was trying to hide. Acharya saw it. He knew it.

We both laughed.

Not the laughter of friends. Not the laughter of relief. But a shivering laugh, a laugh that could shake the foundation of anyone who heard it.

“Hahahahahahahahaha...”

In that moment, the scam was no longer small.
It was about to become a monster.

Chapter 9 – The Paper Leak

A laugh started small and then filled the room – not a laugh of joy, but of a man who had tasted something intoxicating and could not stop. It vibrated in my chest, then in Acharya’s, until both of us were shaking with it.

“Hahahaha...” the laugh rolled out, body-shivering and a little mad.

Acharya wiped his palms on his kurta and leaned forward, eyes bright.

“Prashant ji, kya aap detail mein bataenge?”

I smiled. The smile that had nothing to do with kindness. My brain was a fast machine now; a terrible thrilling machine. I felt the game in my blood, the same way a gambler feels the table. Acharya knew. He always knew.

“Acharya ji,” I began, measured, calm, the planner speaking now,
“Jaise aapko pata hai... NEET ka exam aa raha hai.”

He nodded once — slow, deliberate.
“Haan.”

I set the pieces on the table.

“Hum paper leak karenge. Aur sirf leak nahi — hum toppers banayenge. Select karenge kaun top karega. Kaun national rank laayega. Teachers ko hum control karenge. Invigilators, printing houses — sab. Ye system itna tight hoga ki koi soch bhi nahi payega.”

He didn’t interrupt. He didn’t need to. The plan needed no questions; it needed execution.

“Aur paisa?” Acharya asked finally, more as a formality than doubt.

“Paisa aasan,” I said, almost bored. “Paise toh hum already manage kar rahe hain. Par ab hum paise se aage badh rahe hain — control chahie. Reputation ka control. Agar hum har saal top ranks design karenge, Acharya naam ko koi tod nahi payega. Students, parents, media — sab humare pairon mein honge.”

We both laughed again — that same body-shivering laugh, the sound of two men who had decided to play God.

Months unrolled like a well-printed ledger.

Kota changed. Not slowly — rapidly, as if someone had flipped a giant switch. Acharya's posters grew bigger. New billboards cropped up on every main road: grinning faces, garlands, stories of miracles. The institute's name was the first thing a parent asked when they spoke of coaching. The streets chanted the same mantra — Acharya, Acharya — as if it were salvation.

Inside the empire, the mechanics were surgical.

We started small: a printer in a neighboring town, a clerk in the exam board bitten by greed, two sympathetic invigilators, and a few pliable senior teachers who loved both money and the taste of power. I rewrote attendance, matched roll numbers, slipped one photocopy here, one question paper draft there. We did dry runs. We rehearsed routes. We timed handoffs like a film heist.

“Pehle batch mein thoda test run karte hain,” I told

Acharya on the phone, my voice steady.

“Sirf ten students. Agar perfect ho gaya, phir scale karenge.”

The ten students were chosen carefully — poor enough to be grateful, bright enough to look like genuine toppers, and with parents we could persuade. They were given keys in the form of solved sheets, last-minute coaching, and a silent network that protected them. We fed them solutions through tiny slips during campus mock tests, through a teacher who pretended to be strict but was our mole.

When the results came, chaos turned into worship. Ten names rose like a sudden dawn. Parents wept on camera. Acharya’s advertisement department released glossy placards within twenty-four hours. Newspapers printed sensational headlines: “Acharya produces NEET toppers!” Television interviews followed. Acharya’s number of enrollments exploded.

We scaled.

Each year we increased the funnel: more printers, deeper pockets at the exam board, more teachers in our pocket. We created subsidiary institutes to launder the credibility. We planted fake scholarship stories in local

dailies. We made a small army of alumni influencers to cheerlead our “miracles.”

And the money — oh, the money flowed. Rich parents paid in cash, in property deals, in favors; politicians smiled when their constituencies suddenly had success stories to show; local contractors got building contracts for the new Acharya extension. The ledger I had once laughed at became a cathedral of falsehood, and I rebuilt it — page by page, entry by entry — with surgical precision.

But every edifice has a weak stone.

On a dull monsoon evening, when the city smelled of wet earth and chai stalls, something small nudged the system. A junior clerk in the exam office grew suspicious about a down payment that had no receipt. A teacher who had been paid late began to murmur. A parent, turned cold by greed, noticed two different handwritings on a single admission form.

Rumors are slow poison. They start as a pinprick, then seep. A review committee was formed in a distant education board. A low-paid invigilator got nervous and called his cousin. A disgruntled ex-intern tweeted something stupid at 2 a.m.

We had assumed perfection. We had designed an invisible machine. But people make mistakes. And mistakes are loud in a world built on silence.

We felt the first vibration not as a quake, but as a whisper: someone's foot was coming close to the kingdom.

That night, in my office, I watched the rain draw parallel lines on the window. The city outside glimmered with fake hope. I felt both triumphant and a new, cleaner fear — the kind you only get when you look at what you have created and realize it could turn on you.

Acharya called me later. He laughed again, but the laugh had an edge now.

“Good... very good, Prashant ji. Par dhyaan rahe — aise hi raho. Aur kisi ko jyada upar mat hone do.”

I nodded. Control was the axis. Power the currency. Reputation the weapon.

Somewhere in the shadow of that city, a single pair of feet was moving toward our palace. I could feel it. The game was no longer only ours to play.

The toppers remained on billboards. Parents still praised our name. But under that painted smile, the ledger shivered — and so did I.

Chapter 10 — The Journalist

Months had passed. I was sitting on the sofa of my mansion, sipping black tea in a crystal glass, the air-conditioning humming like a silent servant. Outside, the garden lights glowed faintly in the misty evening. Everything looked perfect.

But I knew.

I knew this empire was built on lies — and lies are like termites. They stay hidden, chewing slowly, until one day the structure collapses without warning.

That evening, for the first time in years, I felt it — a slight tremor inside me. Like a voice whispering, “Time aa gaya hai...”

The Arrival of Rajveer

Weeks later, that voice took shape. His name was Rajveer.

Rajveer was not an ordinary journalist. He had studied at one of India's finest journalism schools, a place where ethics were taught not as slogans but as weapons. He could have worked for big TV networks, but he refused the golden cage.

He wrote for small, stubborn publications — the kind that didn't fear lawsuits, the kind that still ran on truth.

People called him the “young Harshad-hunter” because his first big story had uncovered a massive Ponzi scheme in Delhi. That story had sent a deputy minister to jail.

And now, Rajveer was in Kota.

Suspicion

It started with a simple observation. Rajveer was covering education stories for a small but gritty online magazine. When he saw the sudden, miraculous rise in the number of NEET and JEE toppers from Acharya Institute, he paused.

“Yeh kaise possible hai?” he muttered to himself over chai in a roadside stall. “Ek hi saal mein itne toppers? Pattern kuch ajeeb hai...”

He pulled out old cuttings, compared past records, scanned data from public results. The graph was not just high; it was unnatural. The odds were astronomical.

Rajveer’s nose for lies began to tingle.

He started making calls — to teachers, to ex-students, to minor clerks.

He even managed to meet an employee of Acharya Institute. But as expected, he found nothing. The walls were too thick, the employees too scared, the ledgers too clean on the surface.

Dialogue

At a chai shop near Talwandi, Rajveer met the employee again, trying to get him to talk.

Rajveer (quietly): “Dekho bhai, main aapka naam kahin nahi dunga. Mujhe sirf sach chahiye. Bas itna batao... kya paper leak hota hai yahan?”

The employee’s eyes darted left and right. He stirred his

tea without drinking it.

Employee: “Nahi sir... sab normal hai. Aap jaisa soch rahe ho waisa kuch nahi hai...”

Rajveer (leaning in): “Sab normal hai? Ek hi saal mein 20 toppers? Har saal miracles? Yeh koi bhagwan ka ghar hai kya?”

The employee's hand trembled.

Employee: “Sir... mujhe naukri chahiye. Main kuch nahi bol sakta.”

He stood up and walked away fast.

Rajveer watched him go, eyes narrowing. He took a slow sip of chai, then wrote a single line in his notebook: “Too clean to be real.”

The First Thread

Rajveer changed tactics. Instead of direct accusations, he began to watch patterns. Which students got selected? Which parents paid big “donations”? Which teachers suddenly had new cars? He used data the way a detective uses fingerprints.

He also started speaking to his contacts in the

examination board. A junior officer — nervous but curious — hinted at something odd: “Sir, kuch log papers print hone se pehle hi questions guess kar lete hain... bahut accurate guess.”

Rajveer’s pulse quickened. He now had his first real thread.

Prashant Feels the Heat

Back in my office, I felt a shift in the air. One of my informants whispered, “Sir, ek naya journalist aaya hai Kota mein. Rajveer naam hai. Bahut khatarnaak hai. Sabko khol deta hai...”

I put down my pen slowly. For the first time in months, my hands felt cold.

I forced a smile and said, “Journalist toh aate-jate rehte hain. System hamara hai.” But inside, I knew Rajveer was not just another reporter.

This was the kind of man who didn’t stop at a clean ledger. This was the kind of man who kept digging until he hit the termite nest.

And somewhere deep inside, a part of me — the old

Prashant Rathore from Bundi — whispered: “Game shuru ho gaya hai...”

Chapter 12 — The Man in America

The mansion smelled of citrus-scented polish and fresh bread. Outside, palms cut a slow silhouette against the Los Angeles sun. Inside, in a kitchen that could fit a classroom, industrial ovens hummed and staff moved like a small army. The sign above the door read: Rathore’s — Home of Real Comfort Food. It was a family picture, an empire, a lie with a smile.

I sat on a velvet sofa in my LA living room, bare feet on a Persian rug, watching the city light slow-dance into evening. A life that had once existed only in bargain fantasies now ran on autopilot — stores, managers, invoices, a logo. Every morning, I walked past a row of framed newspaper cuttings praising the success of my food chain. Children in local schools wore T-shirts with my brand. I was a different man to the world: philanthropic, polite, a successful immigrant who had built something honest in a new land.

No one knew what lay under that success. No one knew the ledger that had once been my bible. No one knew

the confession that had turned to smoke.

The Confession Room — The Smoke Trick

I remembered the fluorescent-lit room in Kota with the same odd clarity as I remembered the press conference in LA. Devika had slid the paper across the metal table with a look that promised a future.

“Aap sign kar dijiye. Phir aap ja sakte hain.” she had said. The offer had felt like a lifeline and a noose at once.

So I wrote. I listed names, dates, printers, phone numbers — the architecture of my kingdom — but not in ordinary ink. I had thought of contingencies. I had learned to bend not only numbers but also reality.

The pen I used held a trick taught to me by a man who sold rare stationery in a dusty market in Jaipur: ink that vanished with heat and air, that would look convincing under light but fade like smoke in an hour. I filled the sheet with words that would burn bright enough for Devika’s eyes but would leave nothing for paper to hold later.

When I handed the page back, Devika read, eyes narrowing, then nodded. “Theek hai. Aap ja sakte hain.”

Her voice was official, final. She believed she now had the thread to unravel me. I left that room feeling strangely light, as if I had deposited my sins in a bank that would soon be emptied.

Exit: The Airport — The Last Glance

Poorva didn't ask too many questions. Her trust had always been a currency I traded with care. She packed in a frenzy, alert to the new life shimmering ahead. Kirtika watched with wonder, clutching a small toy. At the airport, I remember the weight of a single look my daughter gave me — a look that would one day become my rescue and my prison if I let it.

“Kya hua, ji?” Poorva asked as we sat in the departure lounge, voice small but steady.

“Bas... naya chapter shuru karte hain.” I said, and she smiled, believing the story of escape I served her.

We stepped into the plane as a family, as if a single signature had folded our past into a small neat crease. I watched Bundi and Kota fade into the tiny window as the plane climbed. I believed I had outpaced consequence.

Los Angeles — The New Mask

In LA I bought a house that reflected a new grammar of life: clean lines, open spaces, staff who never asked about origins. I bought a food-chain business on credit, then on cash, then on reputation. I donated to charities, gave interviews to local morning shows, allowed cameras to follow me as I cut ribbons. The city loved a reinvention story — especially when it came with pictures of happy children eating hot buns.

Sometimes, late at night, I would enter the kitchen personally. I would knead dough with gloved hands, watch the way steam rose and dissipated, and think of ink that had done the same. I trained managers to keep records, hired accountants to build new ledgers that were clean and legal, and built a wall between the past and my new life that looked seamless.

I was careful. Always careful.

The Illusion & the Lesson

Back in India, the confession papers sat under Devika's file lamp — or so she thought. She had a copy, evidence, a path to prosecution, a weapon. She had no idea the weapon had been made of smoke.

When the investigators scanned the document hours later, ink had faded like an evening mist. Microscope and chemical tests were baffled. It was as if the paper had always been blank. The confession was gone; the confessional signature never left a trace. Devika cursed low and hard, the taste of justice slipping like sand through fingers.

I watched the news from Los Angeles. Headlines screamed. Politicians squawked. Acharya's name blurred into scandal. Arrests were made — minor players, mid-level clerks, a few fat partners. Cameras flashed outside Acharya's gates. But the big names slipped through cracks as if the law's fingers were clumsy and wet.

Sitting in my LA office, I sipped coffee and let the sound of the city wash over me. A news anchor called me a mastermind in absentia. A distant relative in Bundi called to say proud things, unaware of the moral cost. Poorva sighed and busied herself with charity dinners. Kirtika drew pictures of our new home and taped them to the refrigerator.

I allowed myself one bitter smile: I had written a confession that could be read and then disappear like smoke. I had turned a legal trap into magic. I had

rewritten the ledger of my fate.

The Quiet That Follows

But there is always a quiet after the storm. It is not peace; it is vigilance. I had learned to read its notes: the sudden pause in a phone call, the knock at midnight, the new face scanning the crowd outside a restaurant. LA had new dangers, and my luxury carried new costs.

Sometimes, when the ovens were hot and the staff busy, I would find myself whispering to my reflection in the stainless steel — half prayer, half dare: Do wrong, earn money, and no one can stop you — but stop at the right time.

It was a lesson in two parts: take what you can, but leave before the web tightens.

I had left India as Prashant Rathore and arrived as a different public man. But in private, late at night, I remained the same accountant who had once learned how to hide a rupee under a mattress. The trick now was to make sure the mattress never caught fire.

Final Chapter — The Ledger of Lies

The sun dipped behind the Los Angeles skyline, casting long shadows over my mansion. Inside, the aroma of baked bread and fresh coffee filled the rooms. Outside, life moved forward, oblivious to the games of men like me. I sat in the same velvet chair where I had first planned my empire, reflecting on every step, every lie, every ledger I had written.

Poorva and Kirtika moved around the house, laughing, living a life that had once been impossible. They didn't know the full depth of what I had done — and maybe it was better they didn't. They only knew the luxuries, the stability, the freedom.

The paper I had signed in Kota, Devika Sharma's proof of my empire, had vanished like smoke. Rajveer's investigations in India had unearthed small cracks, but the pillars of my empire — built on audacity, cunning, and timing — remained unbroken. I had learned the rules: do wrong, earn money, but stop before the net closes.

And yet, the ledger of lies was not just numbers. It was a story of survival, ambition, greed, love, and risk. Every entry, every false admission, every paper leak had been a move on a chessboard. I had become a king in my own right — not of India, not of Kota, but of the world I

had chosen to inhabit.

The night fell. LA sparkled like a thousand mirrors. I sipped my coffee, feeling the weight of choices and the thrill of freedom. One thing remained certain: empires built on lies are fragile, but timing, patience, and audacity can make them last — even across oceans.

I leaned back, closed my eyes, and let a quiet smile settle. The ledger may have started in Bundi, it may have grown in Kota, but it had ended here, in my hands, under my rules, with my family, and with the world none the wiser.

And that was the last entry in the Ledger of Lies.

Author's Note

Thank you for reading “Ledger of Lies.” This story is a work of fiction inspired by ambition, greed, and adventure. Any resemblance to real persons or events is purely coincidental.

About the Author

Prasoon Jadon is a young writer and developer from India. He writes stories that explore ambition, human psychology, and the thrill of risk. This is his first full-length novel.